

V.—The Pirs ; or, The Muhammadan Saints of Bihar.

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MAKHDUM-UL-MULK.

The Muhammadan saints in Bihār are numerous, but the most notable among them are Pir Jagjot of Jethanli, Makhdum Yahya of Maner, Shah Sharf-ud-din Ahmad of Bihār, Saiyid Ahmad Chirmposh of Amber, Bibi Kamalo of Kako, Saiyid Ahmad of Nadra, Saiyid Jannati of Hilsa, Pir Damarya of Patna, Shah Arzani of Dargah, Makhdum Shaikh of Shaikh-pura and Makhdum Manjhan of Mira Bigha.*

Excepting Shah Sharf-ud-din Ahmad of Bihār, I have not been able up to this time to collect much authentic accounts about the above-noted Pirs. Accordingly I beg to present at first to the public a short life of that great saint bearing the lofty title of the Makhdum-ul-Mulk which means "The Lord of the Country."

MAKHDUM-UL-MULK.

This great saint, whose name was Ahmad, was born in the Hijri year 662 at Maner, the hereditary seat of his father Makhdum Shaikh Yahya, himself a saint of marked renown. At the time of his birth Emperor Nasiruddin Muhammad, son of Sultan Shamsuddin Altamash, held the imperial sceptre of India while Hakim Baummullah was the contemporary Arabian Caliph at Baghdad. The present Hijri year being 1334, a period of 772 lunar years has passed away since the birth of the above-named saint. He has been long dead, yet Makhdum-ul-Mulk's fame is still alive, and it will continue to be so long as the votaries of Islam exist in Bihār. His fame is not confined to the Province of Bihār, it

* The places named are in or about the Patna District.

has penetrated the remotest corners of India where there are Muhammadans among the population. His place of birth is Maner, a very old village near the mouth of the river Sone, the well-known tributary of the mighty Ganges. His sacred remains lie buried outside the town of Bihār.

Makhdum-ul-Mulk was a Shaikh from his father's side, his father tracing his genealogy to Abdul Matallib, grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad. This goes to show that the great saint was a Shaikh of very high origin. But his mother, Bibi Razia, was a true Saiyidani, which means a lady lineally descended from the Arabian Prophet.

The first of Makhdum-ul-Mulk's ancestors to come to India from Jerusalem was Taj Faqih, a Muhammadan theologian of great repute who settled down at Maner. His religious teaching attracted large numbers of Muslim devotionalists from all parts of India. Maner in his time became a great seat of learning and sanctity. What led that holy man to migrate from his native country has hitherto remained unknown. It is a mistake to believe that Taj Faqih conquered Maner. He was a scholar, and no soldier. Long before his arrival at Maner the country had been overrun by Saiyid Husain Khing Sawar, the younger brother of the renowned Saiyid Husain Khing Sawar, who is buried at Taragarh, a hill fortress in the neighbourhood of the sacred town of Ajmer.

Makhdum-ul-Mulk's father, Makhdum Shaikh Yabya of Maner, was a holy man of very superior attainments. On the strength of his vast theological learning and acknowledged sanctity, he obtained the hand of one of the daughters of Pir Jag-jot (a Hindi title meaning "the Light of the World"), who besides being a saint of great renown, was also a lineal descendant of the Prophet. By that august lady, whose name was Razia as has already been mentioned, Makhdum Shaikh Yabya had four saintly sons, Makhdum-ul-Mulk being the third among them.

It stands recorded that the future great saint of Bihār received a rudimentary education at Maner under the immediate supervision of his

Ancestry.

Education.

distinguished father Makhdum Shaikh Yahya. But subsequently through sheer good luck, he got an admirable chance of completing his education by repairing to Sonargaon in the company of Shaikh Sharf-ud-din Abu Tamama, a very eminent scholar and educationist of his age. On political grounds that great man of learning was ordered by the then emperor to quit Delhi and go to Bengal. While on his way to his destination he made a rather long stay at Maner, where he was most hospitably received by Makhdum Shaikh Yahya. It was during his sojourn in the above-named town that the future Makhdum-ul-Mulk came under his good influence and decided to follow him in his exile. Shaikh Sharf-ud-din on leaving Maner proceeded to Sonargaon, which he made his home. His pupil, who was destined to be the great Makhdum-ul-Mulk, diligently applied himself to the study of the Arabian sciences, and in due course of time completed his higher education. He appears to have passed no less than twelve years of his life at Sonargaon.

It was during his stay there that he married the daughter of his master, the above-named Shaikh Sharf-ud-din Abu Tamama. From this marriage he had three children, of whom only one son, named Zaki-ud-din, was destined to live. On becoming aware that his father Makhdum Shaikh Yahya has already died, Makhdum-ul-Mulk at once started for Maner, taking his only son Shaikhzada Zaki-ud-din with him. (By this time he had lost his wife as well. He never married again.) Feeling anxious to visit his mother he asked the permission of his illustrious father-in-law to go back to the land of his deceased parent. The prayer being granted he hastened to Maner, where he presented himself and his little son to his worshipful mother. He passed some months in her company, and then asked her permission to go about in search of a deserving Pir, or spiritual guide.

On obtaining the required permission he left his son Zaki-ud-din at Maner as a source of consolation to his mother, and proceeded to Delhi where he presented himself before the

" Bay'at."

far-famed spiritual leader His Holiness Nizam-ud-din Auliya. But that great man of mystic piety and learning did not see his way to accept the "Bay'at" or spiritual allegiance of Ahmad, the future great saint of Bihār. In great disappointment that earnest seeker of truth and guidance left Delhi and proceeded to Panipat to visit the great saint of that city, Shah Sharf-ud-din. This pilgrimage gave no more satisfaction to the truth-seeking visitor, and he did not know what to do next. While labouring under great depression of mind, he was persuaded by his eldest brother Jalal-ud-din to return to Delhi and place himself under the spiritual guide of Najib-ud-din Firdausi, a Pir of no ordinary will-power and piety. The last-named saint accepted the "Bay'at" of his ardent visitor by making him a "Murid" of his Firdausi order. The words "Bay'at" and "Murid" mean "spiritual allegiance" and "spiritual follower," respectively.

After entering the said order, Makhdum-ul-Mulk left Delhi for his own country. He was full of
 Devotional career, Theosophical enthusiasm and every moment his love for God was on the increase. By the time he reached the wooded country in the vicinity of Bihār in the Shahabad District he had lost all control of himself. Suddenly he left the company of his brother Jalal-ud-din and disappeared in the neighbouring wilderness. Nobody knew where he had gone to. It is recorded that he lived for twelve years in the Bihia jungle enjoying beatific visions. After the expiration of that period he moved on to the Rajgir hills and wandered about in other wild localities as well. Many stories are told about his wanderings and life. To all certainty they do not go to show that he had the common lot of mankind. When his wandering days came to a close he settled down in the town of Bihār; still he would often go away to the Rajgir hills and other lonely places for the purposes of devotion.

After settling down at Bihār he is said to have lived there no less than sixty-one years. During
 Settled life at Maner and preaching. this long portion of a very unusually long life (of about one hundred and

twenty-one) he was daily lecturing on the Arabian sciences of his age and imparting a variety of knowledge to all who came to him to receive his instructions. No doubt he was a man of great learning, and his thirst for knowledge was insatiable. But tasawwat, or Theosophy, was the chief object of his study and practice. The fame of his theosophical and theological teaching had travelled to the most distant parts of the then Muhammadan world and he was rightly looked upon as a chosen servant of the Lord.

His great learning, his exemplary piety, his high morals, his inimitable self-denial and his marked aversion to wordly greatness did not fail to attract truth-seekers from the remotest Muhammadan lands. He is known to have had a large number of disciples and adherents, among whom Chulahi and Maulana Muzaffar Balkhi are still remembered with profound respect and esteem.

Several years after Makhdum-ul-Mulk's making Bihâr his permanent home, Sultan Muhammad Shah Tughlak ascended the throne of Delhi in 725 Hijri. That monarch, who was a great admirer of learning and piety, issued a "firman" in the name of the local Governor, by which he conferred the Pargana of Rajgir on the great saint as his permanent jagir. A khankah, or monastery, was also built for him under the royal order. The truth is that Makhdum-ul-Mulk required no material assistance of any kind, but he did not like to offend his earthly sovereign by not accepting the royal boons. Accordingly he kept the jagir for some time, but ultimately he managed to have the grant withdrawn. With a view to this object, he journeyed to Delhi. The imperial courtiers conjectured that he had come to the royal court for some increase in his jagir, and great was their surprise when in the royal presence he produced the deed and requested that the grant might be withdrawn.

Be it remembered that the great Makhdum-ul-Mulk did not live in the materialistic days of the present age. In his time self-denial was a cardinal virtue. The moralists of the past as

a rule were quite free from every shade of avarice They had no love of gain. They knew and believed that

“ Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.”

But that age of spiritualism seems to have gone, and now it is simply impossible for the present generation to realize that man can ever be happy without wealth and without leading a “ productive ” life of perpetual gain. In my own wanderings I have come across human beings who required no house to live in, no clothes to warm their bodies, no pantry to keep delicacies and nothing in the shape of the so-called comforts of our life. Such men still exist, and will continue to exist as long as man's love for God does not die out.

It is an undisputed fact that Makhdum-ul-Mulk was one of the greatest scholars of his age. His

His learning.

numerous epistles support this statement. Besides being a renowned theosophist and a spiritualist, he was a great metaphysician also. A pamphlet of his that treats of ontology amply proves that he was quite conversant with the Peripatetic Philosophy of the great Aristotle. In his religious views he was entirely free from the heretical tendencies of such philosophers as Averroes or Avicenna. He lived and died a full believer in Islam, holding the very refined views about divinity inculcated by that great monotheistic religion. He breathed his last in the Hijri year 782 at the age of 121 lunar years.

I have referred above to the theosophy of Makhdum-ul-Mulk.

History of Sufism or
Muhammadan Theosophy.

It will not be out of place to insert here a few remarks on “ Sufism ” which has been more or less the groundwork of the religions of all the Muhammadan saints, who, like the Makhdum-ul-Mulk, have invariably belonged to the Sunni sect. Be it noted that the Shias simply follow the Imams of the house of Muhammad, and consequently stand aloof from Sufism as a matter of course. They consider the teachings of their Imams to be quite sufficient for their guidance, and look

upon Sufism as heresy, or an unnecessary innovation. The history of Sufism is that it was founded by a woman named Rabi'a who lived in the first century of the Hijra. Her doctrine was that God must be loved above all things because He alone is worthy of love, and that everything here below must be sacrificed in the hope of one day attaining union with God. This doctrine is not incompatible with that of the Shia school. But subsequently "Sufism" degenerated (I am using this term from the point of view of Muhammadan theology) into Pantheism and became a doctrine antagonistic not only to the teachings of the Imams of the house of the Prophet but also to those of the leaders of the Sunni sect. It obviously assumed the character of Spinoza's Pantheism.

After Rabi'a there flourished a certain Abu Saiyid bin Abul Khair, who went a step further and taught his disciples to forsake the world and embrace a monastic life. The renunciation was strongly recommended in order to enable them to devote themselves exclusively to meditation and contemplation. The followers of Abu Said wore woollen garments, and as the equivalent of wool in Arabic is Suf, they received the name of Sufis or the "wearers of the woollen garments."

Up to the time of Abu Saiyid the doctrine of the Sufis was not inconsistent with the teachings of Islam, nor did it differ much from the Neoplatonic ideas in respect of the union of the human mind with the universal mind of God. But subsequently as stated above, Sufism departed from its original purpose, and was gradually led towards Pantheism by argumentators who commenced to discuss freely the question of the Divine nature. Among such men in the reign of the Arabian Caliph Al Muqtadir was a Persian Sufi named Mansur Hallaj, who taught publicly that every man is God, an assertion obviously antagonistic to Islamic teaching. For this heresy he was put to a very ignominious death. Sufism had made great progress at one time in Persia, but it declined afterwards. However it has not disappeared from that country altogether.

The great Makhdum-ul-Mulk, although a Sufi of great distinction, was free from all pantheistic views. He always believed and taught that God was God and man was man. To the end of his life he never departed from the belief of monotheism ; he closely followed Sufism so far as it prescribes that God must be loved above all things, as He alone is worthy of love. Taking into consideration the purity of his soul and the elevation of his character, it will not be impertinent to remark that like Socrates the great saint of Bibār "lived and died as none can live and die."





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